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ABSTRACT

This paper summarizes a May 2000 conference about advancing the civil and human rights of people with disabilities from diverse cultures. The conference included people with disabilities from diverse cultures and members of national civil rights organizations. The conference identified five priority areas for attention: (1) cultivating leadership development; (2) removing educational barriers; (3) providing equal opportunity and access to employment; (4) upholding human rights and civil rights; and (5) expanding voter registration and voter participation. The resulting action plan was organized into four categories: leadership development and capacity building, outreach, coalition and constituency building, and monitoring and evaluation. Examples of specific components of the action plan include: formation of an action organization to be called Leadership Coalition Unlimited, development of an advocacy tool kit, establishment of a listserv of conference participants, and encouragement of disability rights supporters to become active in local chapters of national civil rights organizations. The entire action plan is appended. (DB)

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CARRYING ON THE GOOD FIGHT:

SUMMARY PAPER FROM THINK TANK 2000—

ADVANCING THE CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS

OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

FROM DIVERSE CULTURES

August 23, 2000

National Council on Disability

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Hughey Walker, NCD Vice Chairperson
Ela Yazzie-King, NCD Member

* They conducted the initial review of NCD documents, previous recommendations, and related research for a synthesis of information provided to participants.

For their exceptional work in the facilitation of Think Tank 2000, NCD recognizes:
Andrew Imparato, President/CEO, American Association of People with Disabilities
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The general oversight, including development of background materials and planning, as well as the onsite coordination of Think Tank 2000 activities were the responsibilities of Gerrie Drake Hawkins, NCD staff liaison for cultural diversity issues.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On May 18-20, 2000, in Arlington, Virginia, the National Council on Disability (NCD) hosted Think Tank 2000 to bring people with disabilities from diverse cultures together with members of national civil rights organizations in order that they might find common ground and generate action plans that could advance disability rights and civil rights reciprocally. Concerned about the overwhelming evidence that benefits won for the disability community under the historic Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) were not reaching everyone equally, Hughey Walker, NCD vice chairperson and chair of the Subcommittee on Minority Issues, called for the two advocacy communities to meet.

In full support of such a meeting, Marca Bristo, NCD chairperson and a primary mover behind passage of the ADA, also saw the meeting as an opportunity to re-affirm the broad base of support for disability rights. During the two days that Think Tank 2000 met, national disability rights supporters such as Congressman James Clyburn (South Carolina), chair of the Congressional Black Caucus; Congressman Major Owens (New York), who helped steer the ADA through the House; acting assistant U.S. attorney general for civil rights Bill Lann Lee; Milton Little, vice president of the National Urban League; and Leadership Conference on Civil Rights executive director Wade Henderson, underscored their appreciation for the meeting's goals. Mr. Henderson commended the NCD and the participants for "participating in something that I think is really potentially historic...." He described the current civil rights movement, which includes the disability rights movement, as the "second generation" of civil rights advocacy.

Judge Walker emphasized the need for all who attended Think Tank 2000 to leave their personal agendas at home and to come ready to build bridges and develop an advocacy plan. He repeated these goals frequently during the conference and added that he did not want another "dusty report that sits on a shelf." So this report respects the mandate and spirit of Think Tank 2000. It is not a comprehensive report of the proceedings. Rather, it memorializes the event and what was accomplished by letting the voices of the participants speak through this document. The people who attended Think Tank 2000 represented a cross section of America: Native Americans, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, Caucasians, African Americans, and Hispanic/Latinos. Their

energetic, intense debates and discussions, as they grappled with issues and with forming coalitions and pro-active agendas among people with different disabilities and from different cultures, are captured in the give-and-take exchanges in parts of this document.

Beginning with a fourteen-point list of barriers to full participation in ADA benefits that was pulled from testimonies NCD heard at numerous public hearings they held across the U.S., Think Tank 2000 participants ranked and prioritized the barriers when they met in three work groups. They selected five hindrances they thought should be addressed using the following criteria. The issue to be taken up:

- needed attention now;
- was the most pressing, the most urgent to the largest number of people with disabilities from diverse cultures;
- could have the most impact on the lives of a cross section of people with disabilities from diverse cultures;
- could be acted on at the national level starting in the year 2000-2001;
- could attract allies [such as civil rights organization and advocates].

At general sessions, the groups compared their priority lists, and, by the end of Think Tank 2000, settled on the following five priorities they thought could be addressed in collaboration with civil rights advocates. They were:

- Cultivating leadership development
- Removing educational barriers
- Providing equal opportunity and access to employment
- Upholding human rights and civil rights
- Expanding voter registration and voter participation

Reaching consensus about which problems to tackle is one thing, but developing a collaborative action plan is complex. The people at Think Tank 2000 met the challenge and devised actions that spoke to the issues and to the need to strengthen their capacity to advocate for disability and civil rights. Indeed, their push for next steps resulted in formation of an action organization to be called Leadership Coalition Unlimited and in a list of short and long term actions that fit into four categories. They are: leadership

development and capacity building, outreach, coalition and constituency building, and monitoring and evaluation. Each category called for actions that are individually and organizationally enabling. For example, one action calls for the development of an advocacy tool kit that includes, among other materials, boilerplate letters to opinion leaders for individuals or groups to adapt to their issues. Another action, one that has already been implemented, established a listserv for Think Tank 2000 participants. A third action item recommended that disability rights supporters become active in local chapters of national civil rights organizations as a direct way to form alliances that can lead to mutual advocacy. The complete list of actions is in the Appendix of this document.

Think Tank 2000 set out to meet four outcome goals. They were to:

1. reach consensus on the top three to five issues from a list of previously stated concerns;
2. reach consensus on the primary barriers to addressing the top issues and decide what changes/actions were needed;
3. propose consensus actions that could advance the priorities at the national/federal level, collectively and individually, in collaboration with stakeholders and allies from the disability and civil rights communities; and
4. recommend a process for monitoring the progress of actions that are taken.

On the whole, Think Tank 2000 met and perhaps even exceeded its four outcome goals. Not only is there a list of actions, but there is also an infrastructure for carrying out the actions and involving more and more people in the process of confronting barriers to full disability and civil rights. The action agenda is ambitious, and its success will depend upon the extent to which Think Tank 2000 participants commit to carrying out their agenda. NCD will continue its part by integrating the work of Think Tank 2000 into its other programs, by providing consultation and research, and by enabling grassroots organizations and a broad range of stakeholders to make their voices heard in the ongoing effort to help people with disabilities from diverse cultures take full advantage of disability and civil rights.

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CARRYING ON THE GOOD FIGHT: SUMMARY PAPER FROM THINK TANK 2000–COALITIONS ADVANCING THE CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES FROM DIVERSE CULTURES

Introduction

Think Tank 2000, hosted by the National Council on Disability (NCD), brought together more than 70 people with disabilities from diverse cultures, their supporters, and several members of national civil rights organizations to formulate an action plan for working collaboratively on rights issues that are of mutual concern to the disability and civil rights communities. There were four outcome goals set for the people who attended Think Tank 2000. They were:

1. reach consensus on the top three to five issues from a list of previously stated concerns that should be addressed at the national/federal level beginning in the year 2000–2001;
2. reach consensus on the primary barriers to addressing the top issues and decide what changes/actions are needed, appropriate and achievable at the national/federal level;
3. propose consensus actions that can advance the priorities at the national/federal level, collectively and individually, in collaboration with stakeholders and allies from the disability and civil rights communities; and
4. recommend a process for monitoring the progress of actions that are taken.

By the end of the dynamic two and one half day meeting, participants had formed an organization, Leadership Coalition Unlimited; decided on their first action, to create a list serv to provide a means for continued communication among participants and other interested parties; and agreed to other prioritized actions that could create a critical mass of advocates for disability rights, civil rights and human rights.

Participants came from all areas of the country and represented a spectrum of cultures including Native Americans, African-Americans, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, Hispanic/Latinos, and Caucasians. Most attendees came from the disability community, but several civil rights organizations such as the National Indian Council on Aging, the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO), the National Congress of American Indians and the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition were represented throughout the proceedings. Spokesmen from the National Urban League, Congressional Black Caucus, U.S. Department of Justice, and the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights provided remarks during the opening general session. Invitees from other civil rights organizations who could not attend Think Tank 2000 expressed interest and will remain on the contact list.

Held in Washington, DC, May 18–20 2000, the event grew out of numerous reports prepared for NCD and testimony that members of the National Council on Disability heard from citizens during stakeholder hearings at Jackson State University (Jackson, Mississippi), in San Francisco, Atlanta, and New Orleans. The results disclosed that despite the real progress against discriminatory practices realized by the larger population of people with disabilities throughout the United States because of recent progressive federal and state legislation, people with disabilities from diverse racial and ethnic groups are not benefiting equally from these successes. People with disabilities from diverse cultures in general cannot benefit fully from the educational, economic and social opportunities in this country when race, ethnicity and socio-economic status are still issues in some quarters, when civil rights laws, which were hard won in the 1950s and 1960s, are being challenged in the courts and in legislatures, and when social support systems that had been in place since the 1940s have been sharply reduced.

Recognizing this deepening racial, ethnic and economic divide within the disability community as well as within diverse cultural communities in general, Judge Hughey Walker, NCD vice chairperson and chairperson of the Subcommittee on Minority Issues, urged NCD to convene a national meeting of advocates from the disability and civil rights communities. The challenge to Think Tank 2000, as stated in the briefing document sent to all invitees, was "to solidify our advocacy coalition and

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name the specific actions that NCD will request of those involved in civil, human, and disability rights policy, that will aid in closing legal gaps and in breaking through the glass ceiling." Marca Bristo, NCD chairperson, members and staff supported the initiative and moved quickly to facilitate the gathering.

Judge Walker was clear about his goal for the meeting. He did not want another "dusty report that sits on a shelf." At Think Tank 2000's first general session on May 18th, he said:

> "The one thing that I want to ask everybody here today—the next two and one half days—is to suspend your own personal agenda and to concentrate on what we have at hand.
>
> "I know we all want to tell our stories. We all have a particular pet peeve, but for the next two and one half days, I want you to concentrate on the effort of developing an action plan so that we can make a difference not only for us, but for our children and grandchildren in the future."

The themes "make a difference" and "come together" were evident in earlier presentations at the same general session. By their presence, the panelists who spoke at the opening general session—Members of Congress, civil rights leaders, disability activists—denoted respect for the NCD and its leaders and support for bringing about an alliance between the two rights movements.

Marca Bristo spoke about the group's "opportunity…to sing with one voice and send a message to Capitol Hill carried by the Urban League, La Raza, the National Council on Disability, [etc.] that our rights at threat…are a threat to all of our rights." Speaking to the audience about their task for the next several days, Ms. Bristo said:

> "So I ask you to roll up your sleeves and remember the great challenge before us and remember the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. who said *….A vigorous enforcement of civil rights laws will bring an end to segregated public facilities, which are barriers to a truly desegregated society, but it cannot bring an end to fears, prejudice, pride and irrationality. Those dark and demonic responses will be removed only as men are possessed of the invisible inner law which etches on their hearts the conviction that all men are brothers and that love is mankind's most potent weapon for personal and social transformation."*

After speaking extensively about the civil rights enforcement work being carried out by the U.S. Civil Rights Division and the U.S. Department of Justice, Bill Lann Lee, acting assistant U.S. attorney general for Civil Rights, made the point that "the disability

rights movement is not going to have legitimacy without the active participation of those in minority communities." Congressman James Clyburn (South Carolina), Chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, who has a distinguished record in civil and human rights advocacy, related personal experiences that helped him and others put a human face on disability. He closed his remarks by saying, "You can depend upon the members of the Congressional Black Caucus to be there with you on your issues because we know them in more ways than one."

Congressman Major Owens (New York), who supported the Americans with Disabilities Act from its inception and played a major role in seeing to its passage, stressed the need for "permanent mobilization" of a kind that helped pass the Americans with Disabilities Act ten years before "in order to allow or guarantee that the legislation will fulfill its potential, in order to guarantee that our enemies will not keep raising their heads again and again." Milton Little, vice president of the National Urban League, said the League was already acting on the call to work collaboratively by publishing a brochure, *The Guide to Disability Rights*, in partnership with NCD, which his organization will distribute through 115 Urban Leagues throughout the country.

Lilliam Rangel-Diaz, an NCD member and parent coordinator/mediation specialist at Florida's Center for Education Advocacy, implored the audience to remember "we belong in America. This is our country, a beautiful land, a wonderful place where civil rights and human rights are valued, and the message is we have a common agenda." Another NCD member, Ela Yazzie-King, coordinator for a community-based services collaboration in Gallup, NM, reminded all that many Native Americans do not yet have the benefits of the ADA since disability is "not on the table" for some tribal governments, and her people are "at the very end in regard to services." She hoped that when the door opened, as someone mentioned earlier, "the door is wide enough so that not just a few minority or ethnic groups come through, but all people are able to come through."

Capturing the gist of the meeting, Leadership Conference on Civil Rights executive director Wade Henderson commended NCD and the gathering for "participating in something that I think is really potentially historic...." He underscored the profound impact that people in the civil and human rights movement had on

"reshaping the face of the world," described the current civil rights movement as "second generation," and added that

> "there is a complexity to the problems of achieving meaningful equality that are going to require a level of sophistication and interaction in ways that we have never been able to do previously and that are now much more important than every before. So this meeting comes at a time when we are wrestling with these questions, and your participation is of fundamental importance."

Rounding out the first general session, moderator and NCD member Audrey McCrimon, who is also chief EEO/AA officer, Office of Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action, Illinois Department of Human Services, laid down three ground rules for Think Tank 2000: mutual respect, full involvement, and constructive ideas.

Not Another Dusty Report: Developing a Format for Action

Think Tank 2000 had an ambitious agenda for participants to tackle in a short time. They were challenged to think collaboratively across disabilities, cultures and varied interests to find common ground for action though many had never worked together before and individuals and organizations had largely focused on their particular issues. Therefore, it was essential to structure the two and one half-day process in a way that allowed for creative thinking without muddle.

Background for Think Tank 2000

NCD has a rich body of literature that documents the issues, the barriers that people with disabilities face, the reform measures that have been won through struggle, and the gaps that still need closing, particularly when it comes to people with disabilities from diverse cultures. It made sense to sift through these materials to identify recurring issues, to find themes that people with disabilities from diverse cultures identified as important to them.

Fourteen topics/issues recurred in eight papers produced by NCD since the 1992 Jackson State University public hearing. Of special interest were the October 1998 report

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on the testimonies culturally diverse people with disabilities gave at public hearings in New Orleans and in San Francisco, and the December 1999 report *Lift Every Voice*. The topics/issues that most concerned people from diverse cultures with disabilities, and which they repeatedly mentioned in the NCD documents are:

- Cultivating leadership development
- Providing equal opportunity and access to employment
- Guaranteeing equitable resource allocation
- Reducing poverty among people with disability from diverse cultures
- Identifying policy relevant research on disability issues
- Removing barriers to educating children with disabilities from diverse cultures
- Improving outreach to people with disability from diverse cultures
- Improving operation of the juvenile justice system for children with disabilities from diverse cultures
- Providing greater access to quality health care for people with disability from diverse cultures
- Establishing and maintaining the voice of people with disability from diverse cultures
- Raising expectations of the service delivery system
- Providing information in a culturally competent manner
- Making better connections between civil rights laws and disability laws
- Generating more discussion about the economics of disability

The list of recurring themes and issues served two purposes with regard to developing a plan for facilitating Think Tank 2000.

1) It was source material for a survey that asked Think Tank 2000 participants to rank topic areas and policy recommendations in order of importance to them. The survey provided aggregate data about their preferences and priorities with regard to topic/issue areas; and it gauged the importance, desirability, feasibility and potential impact of particular courses of action. Individual

responses were confidential and not shared with others. The survey is also one means of memorializing the event.

2) It was a starting point that facilitators used to enable Think Tank 2000 participants to reach timely agreements so that they could move on to the requisite task of formulating strategies and actions for dealing with their most pressing concerns.

To clarify even more so what participants were being asked to do, the facilitators described priority issues as ones that

a) need attention now;
b) are the most pressing, the most urgent to the largest number of people with disabilities from diverse cultures;
c) could have the most impact on the lives of a cross section of people with disabilities from diverse cultures;
d) can be acted on at the national level starting in the year 2000–2001; and
e) could attract allies.

Participants were assigned to one of three groups: Red, Green or Blue. Every effort was made to diversify the groups so that each included a cross section of organizations, disabilities, races and cultures. To keep things moving and, at the same time, to encourage reflective discussions and elicit everyone's views, facilitators were given a general framework for guiding the work groups through a process of naming, sorting, and narrowing until they reached consensus at each of their small group meetings and subsequently at the general sessions. Mindful of Judge Walker's call for action, not rhetoric, the work process needed to be understandable, simply executed, and respectful of the diverse cultures and disability groups in attendance. Facilitators used familiar terms --who, what, when, how-- to help the groups proceed, e.g.

- What are the priority issues, the primary barriers, the demands, and the principal recommendations? What are the categories of actions that can be taken? Do we want legislation enacted or amended, funds allocated or re-allocated, hearings held, agency responsibilities clarified, timetables set for

compliance, data collected, delivery systems re-organized, culturally appropriate information disseminated to targeted populations, policies evaluated or revised?

- How can actions be carried out? What are the steps to taking effective actions?
- Who should act on the issues? Who are the stakeholders, the allies, and what do they have in common?
- When should actions be carried out? Timing is crucial.
- How do we monitor progress, measure success, know when to revise the action plan?

By the second day, the three Think Tank 2000 work groups had agreed on five essential issues after vigorously discussing the topics the day before. The priority issues they decided on were:

- Cultivating leadership development
- Removing educational barriers to educating children with disabilities from diverse cultures;
- Providing equal opportunity and access to employment
- Upholding human rights
- Expanding voter registration

Although a number of issues mentioned in the original list do not appear in the second list, it is clear from the transcripts of each group meeting that they are folded into the five priority issues. For example, establishing and maintaining the voice of people from diverse cultures with disability is a matter of leadership development. People thought that addressing other issues on the original list also required leadership as well as coalition building and political know-how, e.g. having a fair share of the resources and greater access to quality health care and to other service delivery systems cannot be accomplished without these capacities.

Turning Talk into Actions

Reaching consensus about which problems to tackle first is not easy, but deciding on a course of action is particularly complex. Successful social justice movements have many of these action-related features in common:

- a committed core group of people who understand the issues, think strategically, make the demands for change, and are consistent, tenacious, and dedicated to carrying out the fight for meaningful change, even if it takes a long time;
- influential supporters in key positions who are willing to speak out and use their influence to facilitate change, e.g., through legislatures, the courts, and the business and civic sectors;
- the ability to attract diverse allies and broad public support;
- the ability to mobilize an informed, broad, diverse, cross section of the public who can become the critical mass, the engaged constituency, whose raised voices can help convince policy makers to make the changes that social justice demands;
- adequate resources to support the movement for the duration;
- the ability to keep the core group, allies, supporters and the public informed;
- the ability to use opportunities to advantage and to keep a finger on the pulse of political, social and economic trends;
- alliances with like-minded groups and individuals; and
- representative leadership that is informed, democratic, receptive, continues to develop, and is connected to the base of supporters and to the people who suffer the most from injustices.

Think Tank Deliberations

Action ideas abounded in the work groups, but the challenge was to turn these good ideas into operations. Some exchanges that took place during work group meetings exemplify how the groups moved from generalities about issues to specifics about actions.

Identifying Common Ground/Causes

During the discussion about formulating an action plan, a member of one group suggested that it would be useful to identify civil and human rights organizations that could collaborate with disability rights organizations on leadership development. In response, another member of the group said identifying groups was not the objective. Think Tank 2000 needed to know how to bring the groups to the table, how to connect the dots to make other groups understand and act together for their common good. For example, if a young Black man is shot and does not die, he becomes disabled, which should be just as much an issue for the disability community as it is for the civil rights community that is trying to prevent violence and criminality in communities.

Leadership Task Force

After several minutes of discussion, it was suggested in one group that holding a national meeting seemed to be a good idea. Or, perhaps forming a task force on leadership development would be more to the point, someone else said. "Yes," another group member agreed, but what organizations should be approached? Who would ask them to come, and what leverage did the group have to get organizations to appear and then to take part in the task force?

People in the group named some organizations. Then they sifted through their list, choosing the organizations that fit their purposes and the ones somebody in the group could take responsibility for bringing to the table. "We want credible organizations that are concerned with multiple issues and have broad-based memberships," one group member declared. The work group trimmed the list again.

Someone questioned whether traditional disability rights organizations were ready to embrace civil rights organizations. "Maybe some of the leading civil rights organizations haven't put disability on their agenda yet," a group member asserted. "Not true about one of the leading civil rights organizations," replied a different group member. In fact, this member continued, it is just as important for people in the disability community to become members of civil rights organizations as it is to ask civil rights organizations to advocate for people with disabilities.

Among several questions, someone asked "What about the size of the task force?" A successful task force shouldn't have more than five to seven members. After more

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discussion, the work group agreed on a final list of organizations that should be invited and which group members would approach the organizations. "Let's not move too fast," urged a member. "The first meeting of the task force should be exploratory. Should we hold it in August? No, someone replied . . . Too many people on vacation. What about July? Better. Having settled on the details of this action, the group moved on to consider other ideas that members of the group suggested.

Advocacy Tool Kit

The give-and-take in another group led them to decide that developing an advocacy kit would be a worthwhile action. Their decision followed a long discussion about how to develop leadership that makes a difference. "Too often," said one group member, "people are thrust into positions of leadership and have to learn through on-the-job training. Sometimes they don't say anything for fear of making a mistake." Leadership development should include teaching people how to use their authority, their influence, when they are in leadership positions. An advocacy kit would include tools for leadership. For example, the kit could contain sample advocacy letters that groups could adapt to fit their issues and send to policy makers and elected officials. Another insert could be instructions for how to interest media in the issues.

Building Coalitions from Bottom to Top

A third group pondered the complications of forming effective working relationships with civil rights organizations. A number of national civil rights and government leaders spoke at the Think Tank 2000 opening panel, but what happens next? Where were the worker bees from these organizations? What does the disability community need to do to form partnerships with civil rights groups that are, as one participant said, doing work that is an inch away from disability rights? Do you go to their national conventions? Why not start with the local chapters of the national organizations, another group member said. Help them see what we have in common. When the local civil rights organizations are won over, or the local agencies, they'll carry the message to their superiors and bring in your group to educate the national organization.

Understanding Which Laws Apply to Indian Reservations

"Yes," voiced another member of the third group, continuing their discussion on building coalitions, "but we need to keep in mind the diversity within the diverse group." There is a vast difference altogether when you're talking about people with disabilities from the African-American, from the Hispanic and from the Native Americans. There is not just one big law that applies to everybody. The Americans with Disabilities Act does not apply to all Indian reservations. "Indian reservations have their own government laws," the participant continued. "So when you get people to come to the table and start talking about civil rights, you've got to know what you're talking about. And we have a different way of looking at who will talk for the Indian country."

For two days, the work groups grappled with knotty subjects, and they sorted through countless far-ranging ideas on the way to deciding what actions made sense. Group members prodded each other to clarify, to be specific, to reach out beyond the disability community, to find a larger constituency and educate them so disability groups and civil rights and human rights groups could form partnerships for their mutual advantage. Through their interchanges, participants in Think Tank 2000 work groups could see the complexities, the barriers that had to be overcome and the enabling mechanisms that had to be constructed if they wanted to work in coalition across disabilities, across cultures, races and issue orientations.

Work Group Reporting on Priorities

The two general sessions furthered the process by bringing the small groups together to report on their work, compare their results, question each other, and refine their products. Each group had two primary reporters and other members of the groups were free to contribute to the reporting process, as well. At the first general session, one reporter's task was to summarize the group's work, and the other reporter's was to put forth questions that the small groups had considered.

When the first general session convened, the three groups had already agreed to the five priority issues mentioned before. The reports highlighted the barriers each group thought kept people with disabilities from diverse cultures from speaking with one voice and joining in coalition with civil and human rights groups to advocate for common cause.

Red Group: Challenges, Respect and Worldview

Dr. Bobbie Atkins from San Diego State University reported first for the Red Group. She began by praising the group. "It was such a pleasure," she said, "to have such focus on being positive, on identifying some of the challenges but [staying] optimistic about the potential for collaboration and solutions."

Dr. Atkins reported that the Red Group had identified numerous barriers that stand in the way of realizing the five priorities the groups agreed upon earlier. Essentially, they are poor self-esteem; lack of resources—money, for example, which, if you have it, gets you power; lack of basic knowledge about each other and the groups they want to reach. What does power mean, and how can it be used to bring individuals together rather than divide them? What strengths do we bring to the table? We don't fully understand what our individual and collective assets are. These as well as institutional barriers hinder leadership development and access to employment and to employers.

Continuing with her report, Dr. Atkins said, with regard to upholding human rights, the Red Group "looked at the various ways in which conflicting world views have been presented." Sovereign nations need to be recognized, for example. [There are] "individualized world views and there are family and group world views and…all have a place." The group had questioned why, when world history is taught, there is no mention of oppression, which should be included so "that we better understand how we got to the place where we are and, within that…lie some solutions on how we can move forward." The "major message," Dr. Atkins said "is that we really wanted to promote a win-win situation for all…."

Dr. Madan Kundu from Southern University in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, the Red Group's second reporter, said that the group raised questions about how communities could move from consuming taxes to paying taxes. And they deliberated about defining civil rights and human rights and how to put human rights on the front burner in America.

Green Group: Role of Respect, Trust, and Coalition Building

Dr. Glenn Fujiura from the University of Illinois at Chicago, Mrs. Elizabeth Pollard, president of the National Association of the Deaf (NAD), Mr. Robert Shuckahosee, co-founder of American Indian Rehabilitation Rights Organization of Warriors (AIRROW), and Ms. La Donna Fowler of the National Congress of American

Indians (NCAI) summarized the work the Green Group had completed. Dr. Fujiura reported that although his group was urged to work on voter registration and voting issues, there was a more prominent concern with leadership as an overarching issue. This group requested NCD to revisit the notion of coalition building and agreed that it is a good concept that needs broader civil and human rights representation at the table. They also underscored for all participants the importance of "attitudinal adjustments and the need to look outside of what we traditionally do." One recommendation was the development of a handbook on promising practices for coalition building.

Mrs. Pollard summarized the outcome from the group's discussion of voting issues and strategies that included working collaboratively with existing organizations such as the League of Women Voters and making use of listservs. She reported that the group reached consensus on leadership development and greater visibility as important concepts for people with disabilities to address for coalition building. For example, encourage civil and human rights organizations to set up question—and-answer forums that feature panelists with disabilities. Help the larger population to learn more about disability rights. In addition, ensure that information is disseminated in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways and reach out to more organizations representing tribal communities, the elderly, college boards, and so forth. Use the radio, newspapers, other printed media, and personal contacts.

Mr. Shuckahosee recounted that his group, after some discussion, defined civil rights as rights that are created by legislative actions while human rights are endowed rights. "It is just how we, as people are endowed with such things like dignity, self respect, those kinds of things—respecting another, respecting our races, those kinds of things." He added that the various languages that people speak, which may be the only ones they know how to speak, need to be interpreted so that everyone can understand each other across the board, whether we are talking about civil rights, funding, education or other issues.

Ms. Fowler made the point that "when you bring diverse cultures together, one thing is that we don't know each other…We don't know exactly where you are coming from." She added, "There needs to be a way to get to know each other…that removes a lot of suspicions, doubts…. The ability to collaborate is the ability to trust."

Blue Group: Defining Leadership

Frank Chee Willetto from New Mexico, a Navajo who had been a Marine Code Talker in World War II, followed with his report from the Blue Group. He summarized the process the group used to reduce and prioritize the fourteen points, and, to illustrate his point that the fourteen points the group began with were unwieldy, he recapped what one Congressman had said at the opening plenary: "You can't push fourteen things on an agenda. Put the fourteen together and come up with one which is the best thing that happened." Mr. Willetto ended his comments about the Blue Group's output with the remark that "You are not born with leadership. You have to learn to be a leader. And it takes a lot of education and it takes a lot of experience to be a leader."

Ms. Karen Clay from The Arc's national headquarters in Silver Spring, MD, continued the Blue Group's report. She remarked that the group "came up with something that was workable in terms of the priority-setting mechanism.... We looked at those priorities based on that which needs attention now, that which is beneficial to a cross section of people and that which would be attractive to our allies." Ms. Clay concluded her remarks by saying, "So we actually came up with doable, viable, workable solutions."

John Sanford, leader for the National Family for the Advancement of Minorities with Disabilities, who had questioned his group earlier about what alliances the disability community had made with civil rights groups, felt that he had heard nothing new in the reports that were presented at the general session. His understanding was that Think Tank 2000 would come up with ways to partner with outside groups, especially civil rights groups, but what the reporters presented did not seem to him to be about a mutual agenda.

Mr. Sanford was assured that the goal for Think Tank 2000 had not changed, and the groups would be challenged to agree on actions, including partnerships, but that there were steps that had to be taken first. Indeed, James Billy, Executive Director for the Harlem Independent Living Center in New York, noted that integrating what had been talked about into a performable work plan was, to his way of thinking, the expectation for the rest of the day's group meetings. He observed that "we were running unbridled yesterday. So I think we are getting to that. It is a good point..."

Actions! Actions! Actions!

In the late 1950s, Dr. Martin Luther King asked the question "Where do we go from here: chaos or community?" Dr. King admonished that "What we need is a restless determination to make the ideal of brotherhood a reality in this nation and all over the world. Our nettlesome task is to discover how to organize our strength into compelling power so that government cannot elude our demands. We must develop, from strength, a situation in which the government finds it wise and prudent to collaborate with us."

More than forty years later, there is still a need for "restless determination." Seventy people with disabilities from diverse cultures and their supporters came together at Think Tank 2000 to meet the challenge of developing an action plan for positive change that would strengthen their capacity to advocate for social justice across disabilities, ethnic groups, cultures, and races, and to do so hand-in-hand with civil rights and human rights groups.

Think Tank 2000 can be the start of a dynamic push forward because the participants committed to deeds, not just words. In fact, some participants adopted as their tag line "We're fired up!"—a rallying cry that a Chicago civil rights activist coined in the 1980's. The participants' determined willingness to confront the tough issues about language, race, and culture that create tensions in their own ranks bodes well for their ability to carry the lessons they are learning about respect, tolerance and partnership to a wider public. And their growing appreciation of the benefits they will bring to partnerships outside the disability community can only strengthen the movement for equitable and fair treatment of all groups—economically, socially, and politically.

The vitality of Think Tank 2000 is captured in the list of actions that the participants agreed to carry out and in the name they gave themselves at the conclusion of the event: Leadership Coalition Unlimited.

The list of actions is divided into categories, referenced to the five priorities agreed upon the first day. A few words have been changed in the priorities list to reflect the group's feeling that everyone, not just people with disabilities from diverse cultures, would benefit from their actions. The revised priorities list is as follows:

- Cultivating leadership development

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- Removing educational barriers
- Providing equal opportunity and access to employment
- Upholding human rights and civil rights
- Expanding voter registration and voter participation

There are four categories under which actions are listed. They are leadership development and capacity building, outreach, coalition and constituency building, and monitoring and evaluation. **[See Appendix for the list of Think Tank 2000 actions].**

Conclusion

On the whole, Think Tank 2000 met its four outcome objectives as stated at the beginning of this report. Additionally there is now a foundation in place on which to build and a process for doing so. This can be replicated at regional and local levels in order to broaden the base of advocates, constituents and stakeholders.

The action agenda that participants devised is an ambitious one, and if it is to be implemented, Think Tank 2000 participants must commit to time-on-task. Because there are long and short-term action agenda items, participant commitment will also need to be sustained. It is in this regard that leadership development and capacity building are critical elements of success. NCD, which hosted Think Tank 2000, will continue to be facilitative by enabling grassroots organizations and a range of other stakeholders to make their voices heard. And NCD's ongoing work to broaden and strengthen coalitions and carry out research on policies and practices that affect the disability community, stakeholders and allies, will be of service in the aftermath of Think Thank 2000. NCD can be a very important partner with the fledgling Leadership Coalition Unlimited, particularly at the federal level, and by being the wind at the back of this new organization as it takes flight.

When Judge Hughey Walker spearheaded the call—along with the support of Marca Bristo and other NCD member—for a national meeting between people from diverse cultures with disabilities and their supporters and civil and human rights advocates, he had in mind organizing a broad advocacy base to confront the dual injustices people face who are both disabled and people from diverse cultures, and, too

often, poor as well. Through Think Tank 2000, NCD took a major step in the direction of bringing these two advocacy centers together.

The remarks made by two people at the closing general session capture the spirit and accomplishments of Think Tank 2000. Georgia Thrower from Maryland said:

> "I don't know everyone. I was invited to this conference—Gerrie invited me at another conference where we were…there was no diversity [among conference leaders and principle participants], and I wasn't exactly sure what was coming or what to expect.
>
> But I want to tell you that this conference not only met any aspirations or expectations I had, but far exceeded it. When you can spend two and one half days with people and can walk into a room and make direct eye contact with people who are genuine and who express their real concern with you as a person [it's] remarkable. Even within our community.
>
> And I am very happy because I am a new person to the disability community. Of course, as you can see, I have been a 'minority' [racial/cultural group member] for years. But coming into the disability community was not an easy thing for me as an adult. And I see open arms. I see people who understand, and I am so happy and so appreciative."

Marca Bristo, NCD chairperson, closed Think Tank 2000 with these words:

> "I just want to give Hughey a collective hug from all of you. And I want to thank you so much. You guys were absolutely incredible.
>
> [Y]ou didn't let me down. You didn't write a report that would gather dust. And Hughey knows I was worried about that. And you really exemplified everything Justin [Dart] said yesterday…. That a revolution starts with one person, each person stepping up. Each time somebody raised their hand and said, "I'll do that, " it was honoring the words you heard from him yesterday…. On behalf of everybody from NCD, thank you very much and Godspeed."

APPENDIX

THINK TANK 2000 ACTIONS

Leadership development and capacity building

- Establish a listserv for the people who attended Think Tank 2000 (went on line in June 2000)
- Form a task force, with a smaller steering committee, made up of opinion leaders from the disability and civil and human rights communities, legislative offices, et al., to identify common interests among disability, civil and human rights organizations with the goal of developing joint actions.
- Assemble an advocacy tool kit to include "how to" instruments for advocacy organizations such as sample press releases, boilerplate letters to opinion leaders that can be adapted as necessary, etc. Such a kit could be an attractive contribution from disability rights groups to civil rights groups.
- Submit the resumes of people qualified for federal positions to Judge Hughey Walker before the new national administration is in place. Routinely send him the resumes of qualified people.
- Establish a mentoring program within the disability rights community and in concert with the civil and human rights communities to train emerging leaders from diverse cultures.
- Develop internships for young people at disability and civil rights organizations. Look at Americorps, college work-study programs and graduate schools as possible conduits.
- Train to be an organizer with one of the organizer training schools, e.g., the Midwest Academy has been holding training sessions around the country for the last 25 years.
- Provide voter registration in every rehabilitation center, agency, independent living center and at all other sites that people with disability from diverse cultures frequent.

- Join with organizations that are conducting voter registration drives, e.g., Rainbow/PUSH and the League of Women Voters.
- Establish a clearing house for information about disability rights and civil and human rights.
- Join with educational rights organizations to support adequate and equitable schooling for all children, e.g., funding, appropriate student achievement measures, safe and well-equipped schools, enlightened teachers and principals.
- Partner with universities and/or computer companies to get funding to design distance learning programs that can be housed in independent living centers, libraries, community centers, and other sites accessible to disability and diverse cultural communities.
- Host a business and labor roundtable in partnership with a university and/or a mainstream civil rights organization to discuss employment, welfare-to-work and training issues that concern diverse cultures, people with disabilities, youth, and the poor.
- Replicate Think Tank 2000 at the regional and local levels to expand the stakeholder and constituency base for the action agenda.

Outreach

- Become a regular contributor to the "letters to the editor" page in newspapers.
- Contribute op-ed pieces on matters that affect people with disabilities from diverse cultures in general.
- Periodically meet with the editorial boards of newspapers to brief them on federal legislation and federal practices that affect disability and culturally diverse communities.
- Devise innovative ways to keep opinion leaders informed, e.g., with audio and videotapes and on-line information about matters of interest to diverse cultures and disability communities.

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Coalition and constituency building

- Form relationships with staff members in congressional offices to keep them informed and involved
- Establish an exchange program among people from diverse cultures with disabilities so that they can get to know each other by spending time together. Work through organizations that represent each of the diverse cultures, subgroups, and races that are present in the disability and civil and human rights communities.
- Join with local civil and human rights organizations that have a national presence to work on issues of common interest, not just issues that deal exclusively with disability rights.
- Work on issue and political campaigns.
- Develop relationships with newspaper columnists and talk show hosts with the idea of becoming the go-to person on certain issues
- Network at every meeting (i.e., conferences, workshops, etc.) by exchanging cards and information about organizations and individuals in attendance at the meeting.
- Send follow-up letters with information about issues and organizations to key people who attend meetings, presentations, etc.,

Monitoring and evaluation

- Prepare a report card that can be used to evaluate service delivery, agencies and organizations. Publish the report card when the results are available and do a media event when it is released. The goal is to encourage the media and opinion leaders to anticipate release of the report card and routinely make public reference to the results.
- Hold candidate forums during election periods.
- Monitor off-site voter registration laws, e.g., motor voter, to make sure they are fully operative and accessible to people with disabilities and people from culturally diverse communities. Look at recently passed voting laws in states such as California and Oregon, which are experimenting with electronic and

mail-in voting, to see if these new means of voting could improve voter accessibility for people from diverse cultures and disability communities.

- Develop candidate questionnaires on rights issues of concern to diverse cultures, including people with disabilities.
- Evaluate organizations that represent the disability community to see if they have people from diverse cultures in decision-making roles.